SHARING YOUR FAITH

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Witnessing Saves Lives! It Saved Mine!

During my teen years I began to question the love of God. I had grown up in a wonderful home, where both my mother and father daily witnessed to me of Christ's love, but eventually I abandoned Christianity, even proclaiming myself an atheist. That path led me to a very "far country," and I became depressed to the point of considering suicide.

At last I decided to make a "final call" to my mother, for I knew she loved me.

"I'm glad you called!" my mother exclaimed. "I've been praying for you. Are you all right?"

"Not really," I mumbled.

My mother said, "I don't want you to hang up the phone until you promise to come home. Promise me," she begged with tears, "that you will come home!"

I was taken aback by her request and asked why she was so insistent. She explained, again with tears, how she'd been especially concerned for my safety and that she felt my life was in danger. "Promise me that you will come home," she urged again.

Though I couldn't believe my own words, I

agreed, “I promise that I will come home.” And I did!

The consistent lifelong witness of my praying mother had paid off. In crisis I reached out to her, only to find

that she had been reaching out to God on my behalf.

Witnessing, as traditionally described, is largely concerned with sharing the eternal truths of God's Word. One of those truths is that we can be connected to God through prayer, and this connection is vitally important as we witness for Christ. My mother knew just what to say and how to say it in that late-night exchange with me. We also need to know what to say as we witness to others.

Key to Powerful Witnessing

The Bible overflows with stories of redemptive words and timely witnessing. Think of Nicodemus, who came to Christ in the middle of the night, or the Samaritan woman at the well, who came to Christ in the middle of the day. Each time Christ knew exactly what to say and how to say it. How did He know? And how can we know?

Just as my mother had prayed for me, Jesus spent long hours in prayer *before* beginning each day of ministry (Mark 1:35). Ellen White writes, "Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 139). All who follow Jesus' example can

receive the very words we need to speak.

Isaiah 50:4, 5 is a prophetic passage pointing forward to the life of Jesus, and to all believers who would follow in His footsteps. These verses hold the key to powerful witnessing: “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by

morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (KJV).

Let's take a closer look:

a. *Who* is giving me something in this text?

"The Lord GOD," or literally, "the promise-keeping God." He gives me **dependability**. I can count on Him to guide me.

b. *What* has He promised to give?

"The tongue of the learned." He provides me with the **credibility** I need.

"That I should know how to speak a word." He also gives me the **ability** I need. He promises to make me skillful in speaking a word for Him.

"That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." He will help me know what to say and when. That's **reliability**!

What freedom these promises bring! As I connect with God in daily prayer, He will personally lead me. Delightful!

c. *When* will He do this for me?

"He wakeneth morning by morning." When I first read this promise, I tested God and began not setting my alarm clock. I wanted to see if He would wake

me up. And guess what? He did, and still does.

d. And *how* can I receive the full blessing of this promise?
"I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." We

forfeit the blessing if we roll over in the morning and don't get up to spend time seeking God. Without a daily connection, you are really "walking in the sparks of your own kindling" (Isa. 50:11, paraphrased), and you will not know what to do, when to speak, or what to say. Make time to tune your heart to His will before doing anything else each day. God will prepare you to listen and witness all day long.

Ellen White writes this about Isaiah 50:4 and the importance of seeking God morning by morning: "When this experience is obtained by those learning in the school of Christ, they will have gained that wisdom that is to be valued above gold and silver" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, p. 101).

As I open God's Word, meditate on His promises, or walk in His nature, I hear His voice. Thus, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

It's amazing how often I've seen the incredible leading of God as I live this God-dependent and God-directed devotional life. I have been given literal words to speak and actions to take as a result of His leading. God is faithful!

Tell *Your* Story

What has God done for you? How has His life-changing gospel impacted your life? What has happened as a result? What are

you grateful for? Could others benefit from hearing what God has accomplished in your life?

By answering these questions, you develop one of your most powerful witnessing tools: your personal testimony.

Review your testimony often; update it daily as God works miracles in the world around you.

"There is greater encouragement for us in the least blessing we ourselves receive from God than in all the accounts we can read of the faith and experience of others" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 100).

"*Our confession* [our testimony] of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when *supported by a Christlike life*, have an *irresistible power* that works for the salvation of souls" (*Ibid.*, p. 100, emphasis supplied).

Consider the Apostle Paul, whose life was headed in the wrong direction when Christ Himself sent him a "word in season" on the road to Damascus. Paul left behind his life as a "blasphemer" and "persecutor" (1 Tim. 1:12-15) to become one of the greatest soul winners in history. While we remember him as a gifted preacher, the book of Acts records that he often chose to simply tell his own story—his testimony of a life redeemed.

Why not join Paul in sharing salvation with a hopeless world? Tell the mighty

acts of God in your life!

How Should We Witness?

When you claim the promise of God's guidance in Isaiah 50, He will direct your words and actions. One day, while boarding a plane, I prayed that God would help me initiate a conversation for Him. However, the lady sitting next to me apparently did not want to talk. She promptly began reading a book.

I also pulled out a book, one about the life and ministry of Ellen White. Just that morning I had read 2 Kings 5, where a little maid testified to her master about the prophet in Israel who could heal. A thought came to me: *I should, like the little maid, speak about God's prophet to this lady, but how?* I felt a strong impression that I should begin to make occasional, natural-sounding noises such as "hmm" or "wow" as I read.

So I began (not without some anxiety) to do this. Five minutes passed. Then the lady turned and said, "That must be a really interesting book!"

"Yes," I replied, "how about your book?"

"It's not really that great," she admitted. She was reading it for a women's book club, and I asked what the story was about. "It's about a lady whom I actually find a bit disgusting," she explained. I encouraged her to go on, so she added,

“The lady is unfaithful to her husband, vulgar in speech, and her activity, she is . . .”

She stopped and looked at my book, which had a picture of Ellen White on the front. “Who is this lady, and what is your book about?” she asked.

I was impressed to tell her about the impact of Ellen White on John Harvey Kellogg (of Kellogg's Corn Flakes fame). "Have you ever heard of Kellogg's cereal?" I asked.

"Yes, I had some this morning."

"And what about granola? Or soy milk? Or peanut butter?" I asked.

We launched into an engaging discussion of all things health, and soon she asked, "But what does this have to do with the lady in your book?"

I explained the connection between Ellen White, the health message, and the longevity of those who follow her recommendations, which are based on Scriptural principles.

"It's obvious that I must read that book!" she declared. "How can I get a copy?"

Before our time together was over, she had agreed to sign up for Bible studies, obtained the information she needed to order Ellen White's books, and visited the Ellen White Web site, where she downloaded and began reading *The Great Controversy*.

Witnessing on the Road to Emmaus

God is faithful! He will give you the credibility you need, the ability to speak, and the wisdom to know how to speak.

The best example is found in the life of Christ Himself. By examining Luke 24, we'll discover 15 witnessing tips for sharing Christ confidently and effectively.

Let's pick up the story in Luke 24:13-15: "Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them."

Witnessing Tip #1: Draw Near
Christ was not aloof. He went to where people gathered. Here, He "drew near and went with them." While some gospel work can be accomplished from afar, most people need a personal, real-time connection. They need someone to become acquainted with their needs and to sympathetically apply Scripture to their real- life situations. Christ could have reached the world through an Internet connection, but instead He chose to personally seek out those who were hurting.

Witnessing Tip #2: Reveal Truth at the Right Time Notice the next verse: "But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him" (verse 16). What an interesting approach! At this point, Jesus wanted them to focus on what He was saying (as He quoted the Word) rather than simply identifying Him with their eyes. Drawing near and witnessing to people does not necessarily require an in-your-face, full-disclosure approach; sometimes more can be accomplished if

we remain “undercover” and reveal things as souls are able to digest them. “I still have many things to say to you,” Jesus once told His disciples, “but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

So don’t always make your purpose known unless the situation warrants it. Of course, there are times when you must let people know who you are to avoid being

counterproductive or dishonest. For instance, if you knock on a person's door, they have the right to know right away who you are and why you are there. However, when you are traveling, or if you are witnessing daily to a work associate or family member, you have the luxury of letting things play out, which can have big advantages for effective witness.

Witnessing Tip #3: Listen to Them

Now take a look at verse 15, where the two disciples "conversed and reasoned" with Jesus. This word *conversed* comes from the Greek root *logos*, which means "word." The word *reasoned* is related to the Greek word meaning "logic." So instead of making Himself known right away, Christ chose to first *listen* to the words and logic of those He was trying to reach.

You can learn so much about others by listening. Hear their concerns, take them to heart, and tailor your witnessing to each person's specific needs.

Witnessing Tip #4: Explore Their Hearts

What did Jesus do to gather more information? "He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?'" (verse 17).

If you want to understand new friends better, ask open- ended questions. People like to answer questions, and you'll be amazed how much information people will

volunteer when they start talking. With open-ended questions, people usually don't feel pressured and will share what's in their hearts. They will also feel valued because they are being listened to, rather than "witnessed to" or "preached at."

Witnessing Tip #5: Be Aware of Everything

Ask the Spirit to give you Christlike awareness and discernment. Jesus saw that these two men were sad, and He specifically asked why. Facial expressions can reveal much about what's going on in someone's head. We can't assume anything based only on a facial expression, but it certainly doesn't hurt to ask how someone is feeling.

Jesus' question and observation drew a revealing response from one of His travel companions. "Cleopas answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?' And He said to them, 'What things?'" (verses 18, 19).

As you "listen" to Cleopas, can you sense his sadness? Perhaps he sounds a bit angry too. But Christ, the master communicator, recognizes that it's still not time to speak. He hears within Cleopas' question the desire to share even more information, so He asks Cleopas, "What things?"

As you read Cleopas' answer, see if you can diagnose the cause of his sad anger: "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and

crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel" (verses 19-21).

Do you see the reason for Cleopas' anger? He stated it clearly! Bottom line: the disciples had lost hope and were in a vulnerable and discouraged state of mind.

Witnessing Tip #6: Be Patient

If you wait patiently, people will often tell you their problems and give you a chance to offer a solution. Whatever Christ said to the two gloomy disciples would be of vital importance to them physically, mentally, and spiritually. It could mean the difference between life and death.

So what did He say? "He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?'" (verse 25).

While at first it could appear that Christ's words were ill- advised, they were actually saturated with meaning. First, Jesus said, "O foolish ones." Should a fool know better? Is a fool unintelligent or merely unwise? According to Scripture, a fool is one who says in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). These two men had walked and talked with Christ for three years but were in danger of walking with God no more. They were questioning their faith and trust in God.

Let's go to the next phrase: "slow of heart." Slowness of heart in the Greek is *bradeis cardia*, and that's where we get the word *bradycardia*, which is a dangerously low heart rhythm. In other words, their spiritual foolishness had caused them to lose heart.

What was the cause of this life-threatening condition? They were slow to "believe in all that the prophets have spoken." And because of this selective and faulty reasoning, they were viewing a magnificent blessing as the worst possible curse. They were depressed over an event that Jesus wanted them to see as a glorious

fulfillment of Bible prophecy: “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”

Here the entire tone of this witnessing experience changed. Christ moved from being an active listener to being an active presenter of heart-saving Bible truth.

Witnessing Tip #7: Be Complete
Jesus continued to ask open-ended questions until He and His listeners had shared enough information to form a complete picture of the diagnosis and the solution.

Witnessing Tip #8: Be Direct
Once Jesus knew the problem and its seriousness, He wasted no time in directly but tactfully sharing both His diagnosis of the problem *and* the solution: Believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Witnessing Tip #9: Offer the Solution First
To avoid devastating His listeners with His forthright diagnosis, Jesus shared the conclusion—the hopeful prognosis—before He set out to prove it. In essence, He said, “Look, I know your pain. I understand it from your perspective, but I have good news. You are wrong! What you think is the worst possible occurrence [the death of Christ] is actually the best!”

Witnessing Tip #10: Be Prepared to Have an Answer Of course, He didn’t just

leave them with the conclusion. Notice what He did next: “Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (verse 27).

So Christ not only told them that their view of the situation was wrong; He also showed them what was

right, through a powerful explanation of Scripture. You might say He positively reproved them, offering the correct view based on Scripture.

A systematic topical Bible study—that is, looking at everything the Bible has to say about a subject—can have a powerful effect. This is, in fact, what an evangelist does in every presentation. It's what we train our HEALTH students to do at Weimar: to prove and reprove all things from the Word.

Witnessing Tip #11: Make It Personal
As Jesus explained this revelation, He did it in the context of His own experience of suffering— "the things concerning Himself." The most powerful form of witness is often a simple personal testimony. Learn to share your testimony whenever appropriate.

Be careful, however, to not overdo it. A common mistake in witnessing is to monopolize a conversation, which only causes frustration or outright antagonism from those being "witnessed to."

Witnessing Tip #12: Gauge Continued Interest Christ gauged the continued interest of the two disciples by indicating that He had to continue His journey as they neared their destination. Likewise, always monitor whether or not you are getting through to someone, then tie off your time while interest is still at a peak. No need to share everything at once. You

can feed people too much of even the best food and give them indigestion.

Notice the response of the two men when Christ said He was leaving them: “But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is

far spent.' And He went in to stay with them" (verse 29). Now, isn't this the way you'd like people to respond at the end of a witnessing encounter or Bible study? Constraining, begging you, imploring you to stay and show them more?

The best part of this wonderful passage is found in the next several verses. See if you can spot the results of effective witnessing: "Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" (verses 30-32).

Do you see the results? Effective Bible study helps people literally *see* Jesus. The Word is so filled with Spirit that it can take broken, helpless, "slow" of heart, sin-sick souls and bring them new life and energy. The slow of heart are instead filled with heavenly heartburn!

Witnessing Tip #13: Give the Glory to God Remember, true witness will lead to the worship of the living Christ, not the preacher or teacher. Keep God as your focus, just as Christ always did.

Witnessing Tip #14: Leave Their Focus on Scripture In effective

witnessing, you want to conclude the conversation with your listeners firmly focused on the life-changing truths of Scripture. Think of how Jesus disappeared while the two disciples were still marveling at what He'd taught them from the Word.

Witnessing Tip #15: Make Disciples

And what was the ultimate result of Christ's witness that day? "So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread" (verses 33-35).

True witness inspires listeners to share what they've learned with the same boldness and clarity with which they received it. Remember, this one simple Bible study, given by Jesus during a seven-mile walk, was used by the Spirit to turn the world upside down. The men heard the study and were both gripped and equipped by it. With hearts set on fire, they couldn't help but tell others. What a practical picture of effective, Word-based witnessing we find in Luke 24!

Following Christ's Method Today

Ellen White neatly summarizes the approach that Christ used on the road to Emmaus: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

We all have a sphere of influence, whether we work full time, go to school, stay home to raise children, or live in a retirement community. Take time to consider how you can sincerely seek the good of your neighbors.

Some ways to draw near to those around you:

- Take a daily walk while others are out walking.
- Host or attend classes that allow you to build relationships (a birthing class, a gardening class, a cooking class). Try to sit next to the same person each time and get acquainted.
- Join a community club or volunteer as a tutor.
- Find a need and meet it: help someone with yard work, repair tasks, childcare, pet care.
- Consistently use the same hairstylist or auto mechanic. Learn about their families, their interests, their faith.
- Try to use the same checkout lane and get to know the staff at your grocery or hardware store.
- Find ways to show your Christianity at work. Surprise coworkers by doing jobs they dislike. Bake bread and take it to work. If someone has a need (perhaps in health or relationships), take a book to work that deals with that subject. Read it or leave it where they'll notice it, and see if a conversation starts up.
- Keep a prayer journal. On each page list the name of a person or situation you're praying for. You might also add the names of the person's family members or friends. Write down their physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual needs. List the Bible promises you're claiming for each person. And remember to make note of how God answers your prayers. Someday the Holy Spirit may lead you to share these prayers and answers with the people involved.

I still remember Bob (not his real name), whom I worked with at a trauma center. His life had left him cynical and uninterested in anything related to God; however, I started praying for him and asking questions about his family. He responded with one-word answers.

Then it happened: his only son, who had been drinking, was involved in a terrible car accident. Hard-hearted

Bob's tough exterior literally fell apart. What would he do? Where could he turn? He called me and said tearfully, "Don, I need you to come to the hospital. My son probably won't make it. You are my best friend. I know you've been praying for me, and I need you to pray for my son!"

I was shocked to hear he considered me his best friend. As I rushed to the hospital, I realized that the discipline of prayer had laid the foundation for this very moment. I prayed for his son while Bob clung to me as a small child does to his father. He shared his pain, saying that he'd been a terrible father and hadn't "been there" for his son. "Can God ever forgive me?" he asked. "This is my fault."

In that intense moment I felt the Holy Spirit leading me, giving me words to speak and Scriptures to share. Sadly, Bob's son did not live, but he died hearing his father pray for him for the first time ever. And after the funeral my friendship with Bob did not end. He came to church, and never stopped coming. His commitment to the Christ of the Resurrection has never wavered.

I am so thankful for the discipline of prayer journaling. It prepared me for this encounter with Bob and his son, and I firmly believe it prepared us, by God's grace, to spend eternity together.

Prayerfully ask God to show you how to

mingle with others and minister to their deepest needs. In the next chapter we'll examine Revelation 1, where Christ revealed to John an inspired sequence of Bible topics for witnessing. How can you turn daily conversations to matters of eternity?

What Should We Witness About? And *When*?

One look at the faces of the couple, and it was obvious— the Bible study had not gone well.

Sure enough, they declared in no uncertain terms that they would not be continuing the studies. The young Bible worker who had studied with them in my basement apartment watched in disappointment as they drove away, then he turned to me.

"I don't know what happened," he said. "I was just studying Daniel 1 with them."

"What exactly did you study in Daniel 1?" I asked.

"The value of a vegetarian diet, and how it could make them ten times smarter," he said.

My heart sank, for I knew exactly what had happened. The Bible worker, due to inexperience, had covered a topic that—while containing truth—should not be covered in a first Bible study.

After consoling the young man, I shared with him a chapter of Scripture that has become a guide for my choice of topics in witnessing. Revelation 1 presents eight

vital Adventist truths in a divinely inspired order. A study of this chapter provides the *what* and *when* of witnessing. It helps us know which portions of Scripture we should talk about and in what sequence. Let's look more closely.

1. The Scriptures

One of the first themes to discuss as you witness to someone is the Word of God—the Scriptures. Why? Because if people are searching for truth, they need to be pointed to an authentic source of authority. Notice how Revelation 1 focuses attention on the Word of God.

Revelation 1:1-3

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."

Here John describes how he had received the Word and promises that those who "hear" and "keep" the words of the prophecy will be blessed. Of course, a person to whom you are witnessing may not necessarily view the Bible as the ultimate source of authority.

So how can you discover a person's source of authority?

One way is by observation. What does the person talk about? What kind of music do they listen to? What books do they read?

What kind of movies do they watch? What do they post on social media? You can often discover much about a person's source of authority simply by watching.

You may also ask questions to help discover a person's source of authority:

- What is your favorite book and why?

- Who is your hero and why?
- What would your mom or dad say if I asked that question?
- What is the world's greatest problem, and how would you solve it?

Once you understand a person's source of authority, you'll know better how to guide the discussion to the ultimate source of authority, God's Word.

Consider discussing or studying topics that help build confidence in the Word of God:

- If you're witnessing to someone who's interested in science, you might observe that the Bible (according to the *New England Journal of Medicine*) contains one of the oldest-known scientific studies (Daniel 1).
- A study of how biblical archeology relates to various Bible stories is also great, especially if a person is questioning the validity of the Bible altogether.
- A good book to help build confidence in the Bible is *Can We Still Believe the Bible? And Does It Really Matter?* by Ryan Ball.
- For anyone interested in history, suggest a study of the prophecy of Daniel 2.
- Remember the most powerful witness you can give about the Scriptures: tell how they have changed your own life.
- Carry your Bible with you while traveling or at work—it's a great way to start a discussion about God's

Word.

Texts about the Bible:

- 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16—It is inspired by God.
- Ps. 119:160; 12:6, 7—It is true and trustworthy.
- Matt. 24:35—God's Word is eternal.
- Rom. 15:4—It gives hope and wisdom.

- John 5:39—It testifies of Jesus (both Old and New Testaments).
- John 16:13—The Holy Spirit will help us to understand it.
- 1 Cor. 2:13; Isa. 28:9, 10—We learn by comparing spiritual things.
- John 7:17; 17:17—If we are open, He will teach us and sanctify us with His Word.

2. Salvation

The most important message in the Bible is God's plan of salvation.

Revelation 1:5, 6
"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

These verses say God loves us and has "washed us from our sins in His own blood." Why has He done this? Not only because "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) but also because He desires to be with us (John 17:24), not in a generic sense but in a real, personal sense. Ellen White says, "Our redeemer thirsts for recognition. He hungers for the sympathy and love of those whom He has purchased with His own blood" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 191). We often think about how *we* desire to be with God, but *His* desire to be with us is even greater! "He knows each individual by name, and cares for each as if there were not another on the earth for

whom He gave His Beloved Son" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 229). I have seen grown men and women weep when they see this wonderful truth.

Every person you meet needs to be saved from something. With God's guidance, you can use many approaches in helping people understand the precious gift of salvation:

a. Health

When someone gets sick, struggles with addiction, or faces death, their deepest desire is for salvation. Interestingly, one of the words for *salvation* in Greek (*sozo*) includes the concept of healing. If you can help a person stop or even reverse disease, they will have experienced (in embryo) the plan of salvation.

Often as I talk with someone, I find out if they have physical needs and then minister to them with slides or videos on my laptop that deal with that subject. Addictions, hypertension, diabetes, and depression are all related to the human need for salvation.

b. Bible readings on salvation

For many, the best approach is just to read the salvation story. I often encourage people to read the Gospel of Mark and ask themselves three questions:

- Who did Jesus claim to be?
- What did Jesus do?
- Would you be interested in meeting someone like Jesus? Why? Why not?

I am amazed at the incredible power of simply reading about Christ, especially about His last hours. The story draws people.

Recently I met a man who had never read Scripture or attended church. He had been very successful in the banking industry but lost his position due to the envy of fellow workers. This caused him to begin asking what

the purpose of life really was. He asked me, "Why are you a Christian?"

Rather than answering immediately, I suggested that he read the Gospel of Mark and ask those three questions. After several hours of reading and taking notes on the questions, he got back to me, saying, "This guy Jesus was incredible! I wish I could meet someone like Him."

"You can," I said. I explained how someone can accept Jesus (John 1:12), how I had done so myself (testimony), and how He changed my life.

What can you do if people *can't* read? I loan them a basic Bible story set called *My Bible Friends* from the Adventist Book Center (available in book and audio form). I have seen God use these simple presentations to bring people to faith. I've also seen God literally help people learn how to read.

c. Music

Another way to introduce the message of salvation is through music. Not long ago I was counseling an atheist who struggled with depression. He appeared completely closed to any discussion of religious themes. However, all of that changed when I had the counseling group sing Christmas carols.

Afterward he said, "I don't know how to say this, but something inside of me changed as we sang those songs. I really

do want to believe . . .”

He then opened up about what had led him away from faith. After hearing about the misinformation he’d been given, we were able to direct him to correct information

in God's Word. He read the Gospel of Mark and came to faith. He experienced physical, mental, and spiritual healing, but it all started (or re-started) with a Christmas carol!

d.Personal testimony

Never forget to share what Christ has done for you! (See "Tell *Your* Story" in the first chapter.)

Texts for leading people through the plan of salvation:

- 1 John 4:8, 9—God loves us and wants to save us to live forever.
- Gen. 1:27, 28—God created us in His image to live in relationship with Him.
- Gen. 3:8-10—Sin destroyed this fellowship.
- Rom. 3:23; 6:23—Everyone has sinned and will die without God's help.
- Rom. 5:18, 19—Adam brought death, but the Second Adam (Jesus) brings life.
- Gal. 3:13; Heb. 2:8, 9; 2 Cor. 5:21—Jesus bore our curse.
- 1 John 1:9; Acts 3:19—As we confess and repent, He forgives us.
- Rom. 8:1; Eph. 2:8—Receiving Jesus, we are no longer condemned.
- John 1:12—When we receive Him, we become sons and daughters of God.
- 1 John 5:11-13—We receive eternal life.
- John 3:16, 17—We have everlasting life and the gift of salvation.

3.The Second Coming

After considering the authority of

Scripture and God's wonderful plan of salvation, we move on to the Second Coming. Christ's coming is exciting to those who know Him.

Revelation 1:7
"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Some have estimated that one in every eight verses in the New Testament speaks of Christ's return. People who understand His love are the most anxious for His coming. Also, those who suffer from trials have a strong desire to see Him step into human history.

Conversation starters concerning the Second Coming:

a. Utilize current events. Carry a newspaper or magazine about current events. Start a discussion about an event that the Bible indicates will occur before Christ's coming (see the signs listed in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). Ask people, "Do you know what's amazing? Many believe that these very events were foretold."

b. Utilize family events / health. People might mention events in their recent family history that lend themselves to discussing the Second Coming. Has there been the breakup of a home, a death in the family? Or perhaps health challenges related to aging or other difficult situations? With sensitivity, you

may be able to direct the conversation toward hope of eternity.

c. Utilize music. I like the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah*. I ask people, "Why do you think people resonate so powerfully with that chorus?" "Why do people still have so much interest in the Christ of Christmas?" "What is it about that story that you especially like and why?" "If there really was a Messiah, would you like Him to return again? Why?"

d. Ask a question. For confident Christians who appear satisfied with the status quo, I often ask, "What is Jesus doing in heaven? If He loves us, why hasn't He returned?"

Texts about the Second Coming:

- John 14:1-3—Jesus promised that He would return.
- Acts 1:9-11—Angels also said He would come again.
- Ps. 50:3—David spoke of His coming.
- Rev. 1:7—When He comes, every eye shall see Him.
- Matt. 24:27—It will be like lightning shining from the east to the west.
- 1 Thess. 4:16, 17—It will be a loud and audible event.
- 1 Cor. 15:51-54—The gift of immortality is given at that time.
- Matt. 16:27—It will be a glorious event.
- Isa. 25:9—To the righteous, it is a joyous event.
- Rev. 19:11-16—Jesus returns as King of Kings.
- Titus 2:13—The Second Coming is called the "blessed hope."

If people want to know more about the Second Coming, offer to study the book of 1 Thessalonians with them. Each chapter concludes with a text about the Second Coming.

4. The Sabbath

The Apostle John was imprisoned because of his faithfulness to the Word of God. His awareness of the Sabbath and his

acknowledgment that it is "the Lord's Day" (see Ex. 20:10; Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 6:5) should underscore its importance for Bible-believing Christians.

Revelation 1:9-11

"I, John, both your brother and companion in the

tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.'"

Keep these ideas in mind while witnessing about the Sabbath:

a. Let people *ask* you about the Sabbath rather than telling them. The Sabbath, when rightly understood, is all about a relationship with God and desiring to spend time with Him on His special day. If a person does not have a relationship with God, the Sabbath will have little, if any, meaning. Start with helping them build that relationship!

For example, I didn't bring up the subject of marriage with my future wife until I knew she'd say yes. That's the way you should handle the Sabbath truth. Build such a close relationship with the person to whom you are witnessing that they *want* you to tell them about it.

b. Share the health benefits of a day of rest. Scientists have discovered that human bodies operate on a natural seven-day cycle (known as a "circaseptan rhythm"). Taking a consistent day off each week can lead to improvements in immunity, mental acuity, physical energy,

and longevity. In fact, when nations throughout history have attempted to change the length of the week, the results have been disastrous for public health. When you share these concepts, people will start asking how to keep the Sabbath even without knowing which day
of the week it is. (For more on the science of weekly

rhythms, see *The Lost Art of Thinking* by Neil Nedley, pp. 263-265.)

c. Share testimonies of family members or others who have benefited from Sabbath observance.

d. Avoid arguing about the Sabbath, for it is largely counterproductive. Remember that "whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). I cut through arguments by clarifying a person's intentions before answering questions. I might say something such as, "If I could answer that question for you from the Bible, would you follow Jesus in keeping the Sabbath?"

e. Invite people to join you for a Sabbath. Let them experience the sacred joy of a Friday night, a Sabbath service, or a Sabbath afternoon walk in nature.

Texts about the Sabbath:

- Rev. 14:6, 7—God's final message calls humanity to worship the Creator.
- Eph. 3:9—Jesus is our Creator, so we should worship Him.
- Ex. 20:8-11—We worship our Creator by keeping the Sabbath.
- Gen. 2:1-3—God set the Sabbath apart at Creation by resting on it.
- Mark 2:27, 28—The Sabbath was given to mankind, long before there was a Jew.
- Ezek. 20:12, 20—It is a sign between

God and man, that they are His people.

- Luke 4:16—Jesus faithfully kept the Sabbath; it was His custom.
- Matt. 24:20—Jesus predicted that the Sabbath would be kept after His death.
- Acts 13:42-44—Paul taught Jews and Gentiles to

worship on the Sabbath.

- Acts 16:13—Believers in Philippi worshiped on the Sabbath.
- Rev. 1:10; Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 6:5— The Sabbath is "the Lord's day."
- Luke 23:53-56; 24:1—It is after "preparation day" and one day before the first day.
- Isa. 66:22, 23—The Sabbath will be kept forever in heaven.
- Ps. 92—This favorite chapter is known as the Psalm of the Sabbath.

5. The Sanctuary

The sanctuary, as explained by Seventh-day Adventists from Scripture, is perhaps the denomination's key contribution to theology.

Revelation 1:12, 13

"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man."

Here John describes Christ as walking among "the seven lampstands," which would have reminded his Jewish readers of the sanctuary imagery in Scripture. You'd be amazed at how people respond when you help them visualize the sanctuary and its profound meaning in the plan of redemption. In fact, it depicts the entire process of salvation by grace through faith.

I once pastored in a small town that seemed extremely resistant to the Bible truths taught by the Seventh- day Adventist Church. I asked the Lord to lead me to someone receptive, and that's how I met Mike. In our first conversation, he asked how the Old Testament and

New Testament were connected, and he also asked if I was an Old Testament or a New Testament Christian. I sketched out a diagram of the sanctuary and showed him how each part is directly connected to the ministry of Christ.

Mike's eyes filled with tears. "This is the most precious truth I've ever heard!" he said. He started attending church that next Sabbath and was baptized several months later.

I believe we should do everything possible to inspire discussions about this timely truth. Share the sanctuary with people by drawing a simple diagram while describing the service and its symbolism. Next, invite them to look up a series of New Testament texts, all of which show how Christ is pre-figured by each part of the sanctuary. Jesus Himself is the door to salvation, the sacrifice for our sins, the Bread and Water of Life, the Light of the world, and the perfect law keeper. This exercise immediately reveals the unity between the Old and New Testaments.

(On the next page you can see a simple version of the diagram and Bible verses I used with Mike. For a printable version, visit www.revivalandreformation.org, click on the Resources tab, and select Witnessing).

I even have t-shirts depicting diagrams of the sanctuary and all the dates of the

2,300-day prophecy, because you never know how the Holy Spirit will prompt a person's curiosity. God's way of witnessing to His people and surrounding nations was by use of the sanctuary and its symbolism. His form of witnessing still works today!

Sanctuary Diagram and Bible Study

The entrance and the outer court:

1. Jesus was the _ to the sanctuary (John 10:7-11).
2. Jesus was the _ of the sanctuary (John 1:29).
3. Jesus was the _ on the altar (1 Cor. 5:7).
4. Jesus was the _ in the laver (John 4:14).

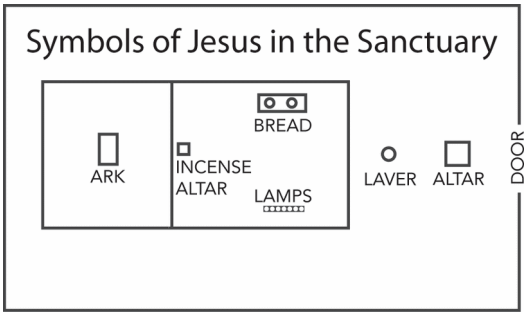
The Holy Place:

1. Jesus was the _ of life (John 6:35, 48, 51).
2. Jesus was the _ of the world (John 8:12).
3. Jesus was the ___ that represents His prayers on behalf of sinful humanity (Heb. 7:25; James 5:16).

The Most Holy Place:

1. Jesus, like the ark in the sanctuary (Deut. 10:4, 5), kept the (John 15:10).
2. Jesus describes Himself as the _ that was kept in the ark (John 6:54-58).
3. Jesus was the ___ from the grave (1 Cor. 15:20).

Key: door, lamb, sacrifice, water, bread, light, incense, law, manna, first fruits.


Symbols of Jesus in the Sanctuary
BREAD
ARK
INCENSE
ALTAR
LAMPS
LAVER
ALTAR
DOOR

6.The State of the Dead

Discussions about death often come up as people face loss, poor health, or tragic events. The simple fact is that because of sin, all will die (Heb. 9:27).

Revelation 1:17, 18

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.'"

Though we all face death in this world, Christ Himself is a risen Savior! He has had victory over death and will one day grant His believers eternal life. That is good news.

Of course, we must be very sensitive in sharing this subject, especially when studying with someone who has experienced a loss and believes that a deceased loved one is still alive. The best approach is simply to study what the Bible says in a matter-of-fact manner. One of my dear friends, a pathologist (someone who is naturally well- acquainted with death), was actually converted through the profound truths of Scripture concerning death.

Texts about the state of man in death:

- Gen. 2:7—Man was formed from dust and breath (which together form a

soul).

- Eccl. 12:7—When a person dies, the spirit (same word as *breath* in Greek and Hebrew) goes back to God who gave it (see also James 2:26; Job 27:3).
- Ezek. 18:20—Souls can die.
- Job 4:17—Man is mortal, subject to death.
- 1 Tim. 6:15, 16—Only God is immortal.
- John 5:28, 29—Righteous people are resurrected by

the voice of Christ.

- Acts 2:29, 34—David, "a man of God's own heart," is still in his grave today.
- Eccl. 9:5, 6, 10—The dead don't know or remember anything.
- Ps. 115:17—The dead do not praise the Lord.
- Job 14:12, 21—The dead do not communicate with the living.
- Ps. 146:4—Their thoughts have perished.
- John 11:11-14—Death is a sleep.
- 1 Thess. 4:16, 17—The righteous are resurrected and rewarded (Rev. 22:12) at the Second Coming (1 Cor. 15:51-53).
- Gen. 3:4—The devil's first lie was that sinners would not die.
- Rev. 18:23—The devil will likewise deceive people at the end of time.
- 2 Cor. 11:13, 14—He will appear as an angel of light and deceive many.
- Rev. 13:13, 14—The devil will perform miracles.
- Rev. 16:14—Demons will work false miracles.
- Matt. 24:23, 24—There will be false Christ's.
- Acts 17:11; Isa. 8:20—God's people (who study His Word) will not be deceived.

7.The Spirit of Prophecy

Some scholars estimate that 26 percent of the Bible is prophecy. This makes the Bible unique, for we can readily see whether its prophecies have come true. Notice how the concept of prophecy is alluded to in this chapter.

Revelation 1:19
"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."

What mankind knows about God has often been revealed

through His prophets. This is called "the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17) or "the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). John recognized this truth by pointing to what he had seen (past), did see (present), and what would be seen (future prophecy).

Of course, many religions claim that prophets have led them, and not just in the past. Some churches today claim that their living leaders are "prophets" and even "infallible." In witnessing about the Spirit of Prophecy, we need to do at least two things: a) Show from the Bible that true prophets will exist up to the end of time, and
b) Teach that we must discern between true and false prophets, based on the tests provided in the Bible itself.

Basic texts about the Spirit of Prophecy:

- Num. 12:6—God speaks to and through prophets.
- Deut. 18:15—Prophets are to be listened to.
- Eph. 4:11-13—The gift of prophecy was seen in New Testament times.
- Rev. 12:17; 19:10—It is called "the testimony of Jesus" or "the spirit of prophecy."
- Joel 2:28—Prophets will appear in the end times.

Biblical tests of a prophet:

- In Scripture, genuine prophets received prophetic dreams and visions (Num. 12:6).

- What a prophet claims to have received from God must be in harmony with the rest of God's Word (Isa. 8:20), because God does not contradict Himself (Mal. 3:6).
- A true prophet will accept all that the Bible teaches about Jesus (1 John 4:1, 2).
- The proof of a true prophet lies, in part, in the fulfillment of his/her predictions (Jer. 28:9).
- A prophet's life will produce good fruit (Matt. 7:20).

While counterfeit prophets may pass one or two of these tests, a true prophet will pass them all.

8. The Saints

God's people are His saints, and John sees that the saints form an identifiable and light-giving body of believers.

Revelation 1:20

"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."

Once people discover the truths revealed in Revelation 1, they are naturally interested in finding a body of believers whose faith is vibrant and Bible-based. Fittingly, this last verse introduces the concept that God has always had an identifiable church throughout time—a place where His saints can follow Him by His power.

Basic texts about the saints:

- Rev. 12:17—The saints are the "remnant" who keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus.
- Rev. 14:6-12—They proclaim the three angels' messages.
- Rev. 18:1-4; Rev. 14:12—They will be identifiable in God's last days as they reveal His character.

- 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:16-19—All need to hear this message, for all will stand before the judgment.
- Jude 3—They will contend earnestly for "the faith" in the last days.
- 2 Pet. 3:10-14—They will hasten Christ's coming by living God-powered, holy lives.

Witnessing is about Love

In the end, witnessing is all about love! "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). And we witness to others because of what God has done for us. He promises, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3, KJV).

God's love is amazing because it reaches us right where we are, while we're still sinners (Rom. 5:8). This was certainly true for me, as I experienced a profound witness while still an unconverted atheist. While working as a nurse, I met a woman who did not have long to live and was questioning her worldview. "Are you a Christian?" she asked. "What happens when people die? How does one accept Christ? How do you pray?"

I resisted her questions, saying, "I'm an atheist like you. I'm trying to walk away from the very things you're seeking to accept!"

She responded kindly, "What would your father say about the questions I asked?" Somehow she had figured out that my father was a minister. Though I did not enjoy it one bit, I began to share what my father would say in answer to her

questions, and, as I spoke, a sense of peace came over her face. The dramatic change amazed me.

Asking for a Bible, she began to read God's Word and started coming to faith. I still remember her last day, her last breath actually, for I was there. As she lay dying, she looked me straight in the eye and asked a question

that would haunt me—and lead to my conversion. She asked, “Would you pray for me?”

Even though I didn’t pray at that time in my life, I did it for her. Can you imagine? One atheist asking another to pray for her? She came to faith, and later, so did I! I can’t wait to meet her at the Resurrection to share the impact her question had on my life.

If God could use me—a rebellious atheist—to witness, He can certainly use you. Claim the promise of divine guidance in Isaiah 50:4, 5. Use Christ’s method of listening and questioning found in Luke 24. Share the timeless doctrines of love summarized in the first chapter of Revelation. And finally, go forward, trusting the promise of 1 Timothy 4:16:

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

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"But you shall receive
POWER
when the
HOLY SPIRIT
has come upon you;
and you shall be
WITNESSES
to Me . . . to the
end of the earth."
Acts 1:8

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